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Integrating infectious disease diagnosis and treatment into substance use treatment

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About Liver Health Connection

Liver Health Connection's mission is to promote liver health, provide education, and to support and advocate on behalf of those affected by liver diseases.

Target audiences: people who inject drugs, criminal justice-affected, homeless, veterans, baby boomers, refugees, substance use disorders

We provide programs throughout Colorado and answer HelpLine calls from throughout the US.

In 2017, we:

- provided antibody testing to 2,980 people
- educated 1,683 attendees at 105 presentations
- answered 1,143 HelpLine & Help4Hep calls
- provided 826 services to 216 active patient navigation clients





U. S. Health and Human Services Perspective

- The U. S. opioid crisis is part of a **syndemic**, defined as a set of interconnected health problems because they have common root causes and interact synergistically, with one problem making the others worse.
- The syndemic we're dealing with is opioid addiction, and the interconnected infections of hepatitis C and HIV.
- Because syndemics are interconnected, coordinated efforts are required across multiple programs and partners to successfully overcome the set of problems and their consequences.





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By only focusing on the substance use side
of the syndemic, we are ignoring the
public health consequences of
unabated disease transmission





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Recommendations to Incorporate Infectious Diseases in Substance Use Treatment





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Recommendation for the Office of Behavioral Health

- When a person enrolls in Medication Assisted Therapy (MAT), the program is required to provide a complete physical exam, including a blood draw
 - We request that the Office of Behavioral Health require MAT programs to test for hepatitis C virus (HCV), hepatitis B virus (HBV) and HIV when someone enrolls in the programs - easily added to the draw; should include reflex testing; we currently offer antibody testing at 8 MAT programs; screening is not testing





OBH, continued

All three diseases are on the rise in Colorado as a direct result of opioid and other substance use. New US HCV infections have nearly tripled in the past 5 years (CDC, 2017 data)

- All three tests are recommended by HHS and U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) for persons with opioid or drug injection risk factors

Add hepatitis A and hepatitis B vaccination for all clients





Recommendation for Groups Using SBIRT

- SBIRT (Screening, Brief Intervention, Referral to Treatment) is a tool funded by SAMHSA and administered by Peer Assistance. It is used by Primary Care Physicians and others to gauge a variety of risks, including drug use
 - Some of the questions ask about recent drug use, but there's no follow-up to a positive response
 - We encourage SBIRT to add a recommendation that physicians offer HCV, HBV, and HIV tests to their clients who answer “yes” to the drug use question so that they can integrate infectious disease diagnosis into their practices





Recommendation for Health Care Policy and Financing

- HCPF is putting together a proposal for 1115 waiver authority to add inpatient substance use treatment

We recommend they include testing for HCV, HBV, and HIV at intake in the proposal

- Add hepatitis A and hepatitis B vaccination

And that they consider offering treatment at the same time if these clients had previously been tested; treatment will be covered by HCPF





Recommendation for CO Dept of Public Health & Environment

- Colorado's health department used to have CDC funding for viral hepatitis surveillance, but that funding ended in 2012; since then, CDPHE has been able to continue the program, but not in a comprehensive manner
- For example, they perform case finding for acute hepatitis C test results (41 in 2016), but do not perform case finding for the over 4,865 chronic hepatitis C test results reported in 2016
- We recommend that CDPHE be given additional FTE to increase surveillance staff and additional funding to fill the positions





Recommendation for all Programs offering Substance Use Training

- Every program that trains any provider - counselors, case managers, physicians, EMT, law enforcement, etc. - should include instruction about infectious diseases that may be transmitted during substance use
 - Especially training provided through the OBH SAMHSA-funded State Targeted Response to the Opioid Crisis Grant awarded in 2017

